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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISTANBUL 000206

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAN/ELECTIONS: A LEADING IRANIAN ANALYST PREDICTS  
MOUSAVI WILL WIN

REF: ISTANBUL 131

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Sandra Oudkirk; Reason 1.5 (d)

11. (S) Summary: A leading Tehran-based economic and political consultant predicts that Mir-Hossein Mousavi will win the Iranian elections in a June 19 run-off against Ahmadinejad. His firm's most recent polling shows Mousavi receiving over 50 percent support from Iranians likely to vote, with Ahmadinejad at 33 percent, a reversal from our contact's April polling results, though he admits Iranian polling is unpredictable. He sees 25 million votes as a minimum turnout goal for anti-Ahmadinejad candidates, as the current President can likely muster only ten or 11 million legitimate votes in the first round, plus a possible one million fraudulent votes, for a total of 12 million first round votes. Before the second round, Mousavi will offer cabinet positions to Rezai and to Kerroubi allies to secure their voters' support. If Mousavi wins, our contact predicts a possibly violent reaction by hard-line Ahmadinejad supporters, which the regime would move swiftly to contain.

12. (S) Summary continued: Our contact assesses that the regime will be ready after the elections to engage the U.S. directly on issues like counter-narcotics, Afghanistan, and aircraft spare part exports. Khamenei may appoint a trusted advisor like Ali Akbar Velayati to shepherd the process for Iran. Our contact also suggested Iran is ready to accept a nuclear compromise that includes stringent IAEA safeguards everywhere, a multilateral presence helping operate Natanz, and Iran exporting all LEU fuel to a multilateral fuel bank in a third country. Comment: Our contact does not hide the fact that he is strongly anti-Ahmadinejad, which might color his observations with some wishful thinking. But his insights reinforce the clear conclusion that powerful forces inside Iran are aligned against Ahmadinejad in the final week before elections. End summary and comment.

Mousavi can win  
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13. (S) A leading Tehran-based economic and political consultant (please protect) visiting Istanbul told us that his consulting firm had recently conducted a poll of Iranians who described themselves as likely to vote in the June 12 presidential elections. This was a follow-up to a poll his firm conducted in April. The results from the latest poll showed Mousavi receiving over 50 percent voter support, with Ahmadinejad receiving 33 percent, a reversal of the results from April. Our contact, whose firm has experience conducting polls in Iran, agreed that polling there is notoriously unpredictable, but he felt his polling clearly pointed to a significant movement of voters to Mousavi in recent weeks.

14. (S) He estimated that Ahmadinejad can count on a core group of hard-line and conservative supports numbering about

ten or eleven million, with up to one million additional votes from fraudulent voting. The key factor, as a result, will be voter turnout: If the three opposition candidates can generate at least twelve million votes to balance Ahmadinejad's likely vote tally -- highly likely in his view -- a second round will be held on June 19, with Ahmadinejad running against Mousavi. Our contact predicted that during that interim week, Mousavi would announce his likely cabinet appointments if elected, offering future GOI positions to Rezai (probably Economy), and several Kerroubi allies (though not Kerroubi himself), and even to Supreme Leader Khamenei's advisor Ali Akbar Velayati (probably Foreign Minister). The purpose would be to draw Rezai's and Kerroubi's endorsements and voter support, and to ensure the Supreme Leader stays neutral. Our contact predicted a second round Mousavi victory by at least several million votes.

Keeping a close eye on voting  
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15. (S) In response to rumors that Ahmadinejad's campaign has access to several million blank ballots, our contact believed that his campaign either does not have access to, or would not risk, ballot-stuffing of more than one million votes. He said that Mousavi's campaign has agreed with Kerroubi's campaign, and has reached out to Rezai's campaign, to coordinate polling station observations on election day. (Comment: Candidate representatives who have been approved by the Interior Ministry are permitted to observe the voting at designated polling stations). The goal is to have 40,000 approved observers, and to ensure every polling station has at least one observer in place throughout the day. Mousavi's

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campaign team is setting up an SMS notification system, so observers who witness fraud or irregularities can send instant text messages back to Mousavi's campaign headquarters, which can notify the Interior Ministry and/or the press.

Hardliner Backlash  
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16. (S) In the event of a Mousavi victory, some of Ahmadinejad's hard-core conservative supporters could possibly take to the streets in violent protest, our contact cautioned. Ahmadinejad's supporters know that they would be "cleaned out" of office, losing ideological influence as well as jobs, and even admonitions from Khamenei (whom they fault for not doing enough to secure an Ahmadinejad victory) to accept the outcome peacefully might be ignored. Indeed, Ahmadinejad's public airing during the debates of corruption allegations against Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, a close advisor to Khamenei, was seen by many in Iran as a direct warning from Ahmadinejad to Khamenei that he is also vulnerable in the event of an Ahmadinejad loss at the polls. For Khamenei and most regime power centers, however, maintaining the stability of "the system" is paramount, and should Ahmadinejad supporters take to the streets to protest an election loss, there could potentially be "a swift and hard reaction" to contain the protest.

US-Iran Engagement: The regime is ready  
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16. (S) Notwithstanding the risk of hard-liner street protests described above, as soon as the election is over the Iranian regime will be ready to engage the U.S. directly, our contact believes. He praised the respectful tone of President Obama's June 4 Cairo speech, and credited that speech and the USG decision to invite Iranians officials to U.S. national day receptions as further gestures that have helped convince even regime hard-liners that the USG is serious about engagement. Our contact noted that even hard-line Ayatollah Jannati, the Secretary of the Guardian Council (and usually an Ahmadinejad supporter) had welcomed

President Obama's Cairo speech, reflecting the belief even among regime conservatives that the USG was indeed serious about its desire for engagement.

17. (S) One reason the Iranian government has reacted so carefully to USG outreach is because Khamenei does not want Ahmadinejad to claim any credit for improved relations, our contact assessed. Indeed, the regime recognizes that the USG understands this, and appreciates that Washington has not taken a lack of formal or tangible Iranian response as a rejection of USG gestures. As soon as the elections results are confirmed, our contact expects Khamenei to appoint a trusted representative (probably Velayati) to shepherd the process of engaging with the U.S. If the USG can further respond to Khamenei's repeated requests for a tangible offer of cooperation to back up the respectful tone -- for example on counter-narcotic cooperation or easing the export of aircraft spare parts to Iran -- our contact would expect Khamenei to give his representative the authority to sit down with a USG counterpart very quickly. Meanwhile, the regime is also likely to loosen up on people-to-people exchanges, our contact further assessed, provided the USG is willing to work directly and transparently with the GOI in managing those exchanges.

The nuclear issue: Iran ready to join a multilateral fuel bank  
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18. (S) We pointed out that while steps toward engagement were positive and promising, such a process would not long survive if the USG felt Iran continued to stall, obfuscate, or otherwise continue not to cooperate on the nuclear issue. Our contact believed that Rezai's campaign position offered the basis for a compromise that the regime would be willing to accept: That Iran would agree to rigorous Additional Protocol "plus" safeguards under IAEA supervision and indeed would encourage a multilateral (commercial) presence at the Natanz enrichment facility, which would be used to produce LEU fuel that would be sent to a multilateral fuel center in a third country for storage and sale on the reactor fuel market. Our contact acknowledged that Iran is unlikely to have any nuclear reactors that would use Iranian-made nuclear fuel for at least a decade, "if ever" (comment: The Bushehr reactor can only use Russian-supplied LEU fuel). He reiterated his long-standing view that Iran is pursuing enrichment capability more for prestige and hard-currency profits than for nuclear energy independence. With regards

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to nuclear weapons capability, "they have now demonstrated what they need to demonstrate."

Comments  
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19. (S) Our interlocutor does not hide the fact that he is himself a strong Mousavi supporter (or more accurately a strong anti-Ahmadinejad opponent), which might color his observations with at least a small degree of wishful thinking. But his insights into possible election outcomes reinforce the clear conclusion that powerful forces inside Iran -- starting with former President Rafsanjani, but including former President Khatami -- are aligned against Ahmadinejad and working hard to ensure that their candidate has a realistic chance to win the Presidency on June 12.  
WIENER